

REMARKS

Status of Claims:

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 8-11, 14, 16, 18 and 19 have been amended. Claim 2, 5, 7 and 21 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, Claims 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8-20 are currently pending.

Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicant expresses appreciation to the Examiner for the indication that claims 2, 3, 5, 7-16, 18 and 19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

The subject matter of previously pending claim 2 has been included in independent claim 1. Therefore, independent claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Because claim 3, as amended, is dependent from independent claim 1, dependent claim 3 is believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons independent claim 1 is believed to be allowable.

The subject matter of previously pending claim 5 has been included in independent claim 4. Therefore, independent claim 4 is believed to be allowable.

The subject matter of previously pending claim 7 has been included in independent claim 6. Therefore, independent claim 6 is believed to be allowable. Because dependent claims 8, 9 17 and 20 dependent from independent claim 6, dependent claims 8, 9 17 and 20 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons independent claim 6 is believed to be allowable.

Independent claims 10, 11, 14, 16, 18 and 19 have been rewritten in independent form and include all of the limitations of the previous base claim 6 and, therefore, claims 10, 11, 14, 16, 18 and 19 are believed to be allowable. Claims 12 and 13 dependent from independent claim 11, and claims 12 and 13 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons that claim 11 is believed to be allowable. Claim 15 dependent from independent claim 14 and claim 15 is

believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons independent claim 14 is believed to be allowable.

Examiner Rejections:

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being fully met by Shioba (USP 5,430,243); and Claims 1, 4, 6, 17, 20 and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being fully met by Tanji (USP 5,973,255).

Claim 21 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. With respect to Claim 1, 4, 7, 17 and 20, as amended, the rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner indicated that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The subject matter of claim 2 has been included in independent claim 1. Therefore independent claim 1 is believed to be allowable. The Examiner indicated that claim 5 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The subject matter of claim 5 has been included in independent claim 4. Therefore independent claim 4 is believed to be allowable.

The Examiner indicated that claim 7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The subject matter of claim 7 has been included in the base independent claim 6. Therefore independent claim 6 is believed to be allowable over the prior art. Because claims 17 and 20 depend from currently amended claim 6, dependant claims 17 and 20 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons independent claim 6 is believed to be allowable.

Conclusion:

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0872. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 50-0872. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 50-0872.

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Respectfully submitted,

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